

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, February 13, 2008 – 4:00pm
Barber Park/Simkins Pavilion – 1500 Dan's Road

PRESENT: John Beaman, Jr., Paul Brown, Marc Bush (arrived 4:12pm), Ken Free, Lori Galbreath (excused 4:57), David Hoggard (arrived 4:23pm), Rose Marie Ponton, Randy Scott

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kristen Barbee, Sheldon Becton, Steve Branson, Candice Bruton, Adrienne Byrd, Susan Gallimore, Jennifer Hance, Courtney Hemphill, John Hughes, Bonnie Kuester, Mary Alice Kurr-Murphy, Dan Maxson, Mike Moye, Brooks Mullane, Lane Newsome, Darius Oliver, Eddie Pugh, Marcie Richardson, Mike Simpson, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson

OTHERS: Alex Ashton (Guilford County), Roger Bardsley (Guilford County), T. Dianne Bellamy-Small (City Council), Reggie Lee (Facilities and Engineering), Bernie Meyers (Guilford County Parks and Recreation Commission), Bob Morgan (Assistant City Manager), Karen Neill (Cooperative Extension Services), Mary Vigue (Budget and Evaluation)

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Barber Park/Simkins Pavilion. Randy Scott, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 9, 2008 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

Recognition

Bonnie Kuester, Director, recognized the Parks and Recreation January Employee of the Month, Sheldon Becton and February Employee of the Month, Kristen Barbee.

Simkins Pavilion Presentation

Lane Newsome, Sportsplex and Simkins Pavilion Manager presented the Commission with historical information about the Simkins Pavilion and programs currently held there.

Newsome informed the Commission of a Sportsplex parent group that has formed and is supporting the Sportsplex by sending email correspondences to City Council, the Mayor, and the City Manager's Office regarding issues at the Sportsplex, such as the need for more parking spaces. A copy of the email was distributed to the Commission.

City Arts Music Center Presentation

Jennifer Hance, Music Center Director, informed the Commission of City Art Music programs and upcoming events. Hance introduced Susan Gallimore, Music Instructor and three of her violin students who performed, Anna Eusebio, Libby Rodenbough and Alexandria Gerald.

At this time Scott turned the meeting over to David Hoggard, Chair.

OLD BUSINESS

CIP Process

Candice Bruton, Planning and Project Development Manager, stated that the Commission Capital Improvement Program (CIP) sub-committee met twice since the previous Commission meeting. The CIP items are an outcome of the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Planning processes that are completed with significant public input, system wide needs that have come to our attention that will help us improve in the way that we deliver services, and input from neighborhood and community groups. Parks and Recreation has many approved bond projects in various planning stages. The sub-committee focused around unfunded projects.

Distinct categories were developed; athletic field development, land requisition, park reinvestment, pools, facility investment, and future parking facility development.

Bruton turned the presentation over the CIP sub-committee.

Hoggard stated that the CIP committee included Marc Bush, Rose Marie Ponton, Paul Brown, and himself. Discussions focused mainly on the many needs for park and facility reinvestments that the department is not able to maintain, which is 16 million dollars worth of needs. The largest investment would be 12 million dollars for shelter/restroom/concession replacement.

Marc Bush, Commissioner, stated that the focus was to look at areas of importance, look to the future and the need to be aggressive. The needs are important whether it's reinvestment of existing facilities or planning for the future and what would be important to the community. Athletic field development from a Sports Commission stand point is very important. It was identified long ago the need for a swim facility and its benefit to the community in terms of people learning to swim and being able to promote Greensboro for swimming competition events.

Rose Marie Ponton, Commissioner, stated that there is over 21.5 million dollars involved with pools. The department has many needs of replacement, development, and upkeep. Ponton suggested having a session to allow the public to speak on what they want then create a master plan for current pools or pools needed.

Ponton continued stating that money for maintenance has become very tight and future projects need to have discussions on how it will be maintained. Perhaps there should be a plan on how the community can assist with maintenance.

Kuester stated that Parks and Recreation has been honored many times with local groups and individuals giving the department a facility, however staff must maintain it. The department appreciates the gifts, but facilities need to be maintained, need landscaping, and need a crew that works in the facility which is all long term expenses that right now the department can not fund. Sub-committee members suggested that staff create a policy or recommendation as to how we would address this issue in future. This is not to discourage community groups or individuals who want to donate.

Hoggard stated that he agreed with Kuester that this is not to discourage any community group from giving, however to maintain gifts becomes a big figure.

Scott inquired if the CIP lists a new pool in Greensboro.

Bruton replied stating yes. An exact location has not been identified but there have been discussions of perhaps a pool to be located in central Greensboro. The pool would offer competitive space but also have the component where kids can learn to swim and available to public for leisure opportunities.

Bush stated that this would be a year-round pool.

Ponton stated that there should be renovation to several outdoor pools, but also develop a large swimming facility as there needs to be a mixed package that would satisfy everyone. Ponton mentioned once more that this needs master planning and public input.

Bruton stated that Parks and Recreation can facilitate public input and with the timing of a proposed bond in 2010 this will allow time for public meetings. If the Commission approves the CIP it will then be taken to City Council.

Hoggard stated that one of the charges from City Council last year was for the Parks and Recreation Commission to become advocates and he urged the Commission not to vote for the CIP unless they are going to support it. If the Commission is going to be behind such a program then members need to be the salesmen and advocates for the program. Commission members need to be out in the community, attending community meetings, and being vocal as to what Parks and Recreation needs.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Paul Brown and seconded by Randy Scott to support the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Budget Update

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, stated that during the previous Commission meeting the Commission was informed of a position freeze in order for the city to save money during the current year. All benefited positions that become vacant are reviewed by the City Manager. Parks and Recreation has several positions that are on the list for exceptions that have not been approved. All departments within the city are pulling together wearing different hats at one time to make sure we are able to get through this position freeze period. The budget is in such a situation that this is necessary throughout the city organization.

Maxson continued stating that staff has submitted budget requests to Parks and Recreation Administration who is currently in the process of reviewing the requests. Because of huge increases in specific items, such as workers compensation, our department has to cut operations dollars in order to make it within target. Over the next few days staff will be working to make sure the department's budget comes in at target. Cost increases are not expected in the coming 2008-09 year over what has already been approved.

Maxson stated that as part of the budget process staff can request funding for service enhancements where extra can be added to the budget for items such as maintenance of buildings, grounds, roadways, parks, etc. Budget and Evaluation reviews these requests which totaled over 1.8 million dollars. Maxson stated that there is not extra funding for these enhancements and almost all of that money has been folded into the CIP. There are a few small maintenance issues that can be absorbed within the budget.

Barber Park Update

Bob Morgan, Assistant City Manager, stated that at the end of October 2007 there was a neighborhood meeting regarding the testing that had been done at Barber Park. One type of testing was environmental testing and another was toxicological testing. As the result of that testing the toxicologist determined that there was no risk to the public to use the park. There are 3-4 small areas inside the construction area that they suggested further testing. Other testing will be completed in areas on the left side as you enter the park.

Morgan continued stating that the State is not concerned about what has been found; therefore that puts the park on low priority. The State is currently not sufficiently staffed and has recently decided to designate counties some responsibilities for administering programs and recently signed an administrative agreement with Guilford County. This is the third time this project has been transferred to another group of people to review. This week a draft letter was received from the County stating what they propose us to do. We will in return give them feedback. Morgan stated he believes this will be a very slow process.

Morgan stated that in regards to construction, the general contractor and the City of Greensboro are about \$100,000 apart in what the City feels they should pay to re-start construction on the park. Woolpert, Inc. looked at the cost figure that the contractor submitted and suggested a reasonable rate. Facilities and Engineering looked at the roof system and sprayground equipment and found an equally quality product for a lesser cost. The contractor is still interested in working with the City and doing the job. The contractor has been advised that an agreement needs to be reached on what the City is going to pay them before they start. Hopefully the general contractor will come back to us with another offer based on the information given to them and work out an agreement.

Morgan stated that Facilities and Engineering has also looked at the maintenance building. The current maintenance building has serious maintenance issues and is not worth renovating. The cost of a pre-engineered metal building as opposed to a brick building will save over \$900,000. This can be included in the budget this year.

Morgan continued stating that all departments have been asked to identify 2% of their full-time positions to be cut from their budgets. City Council added some police officers in the budget. An annexation will take place this year which will require adding personnel for that annexation, however gaining revenue to cover expenses.

Bush inquired as to what percentage of construction has been completed at Barber Park before construction ceased.

Reggie Lee, Facilities and Engineering, replied stating 40% of construction has been completed.

NEW BUSINESS

Invasive Plant Policy Proposal

This item was heard later in the meeting.

Guilford County Parks and Recreation Bond Referendum

Bernie Meyers, Guilford County Parks and Recreation Commission, stated that on May 6, 2008 voters will be asked to approve a 20.2 million dollar bond for continuation of improvements in parks and on greenways. Since 1988, 42 million dollars in bonds have been approved. The 42 million dollars is established for parks of more than 2,300 acres, the Bicentennial Greenway, Lake Brandt Greenway, build playing fields at 14 schools, to buy open space tracts at various parts of the county to remain undeveloped. The funds will also be used towards Bryan Park at Guilford County, which is approximately 500 acres that was donated by the Joseph Bryan Foundation and is owned by the City of Greensboro and Guilford County. The County is proposing 6 million dollars to start phase one to include 7 soccer fields, lacrosse fields, parking, fishing, picnic shelters and playground equipment. Five million dollars would be used towards Hagan-Stone Park to build a new pool, pool house, parking for RV's, amphitheatre and an environmental education center. Triad Park, owned by Forsyth and Guilford Counties, would use 1.2 million dollars. This park costs the county \$400,000 a year to continue the phases not counting operating expenses. The 1.2 million dollars would allow three years of money towards finishing the park. Four million dollars would go towards the proposed Piedmont Greenway from Greensboro to Triad Park, Reedy Fork Greenway from Lake Townsend to Triad Park, Hickory Creek Deep River Greenway from Greensboro and High Point to Southwest Park, the Northwest Rail Trail from downtown Greensboro to Stokesdale along the old Atlantic and Yadkin rail line. Two million dollars would be used towards a miracle field for handicap in Central High Point (currently there is not a place in Guilford County where handicap in wheelchairs can participate in sports). Two million dollars of the bond would provide a greenway loop park around Greensboro, a skate park, and other facilities.

Meyers asked the Commission for their support to help get the bond passed.

Bush inquired if cross country has been removed as a venue for Bryan Park at Guilford County.

Meyers replied stating no.

Free stated that efforts between the city and county need to blend in with priorities of the city so that we are not duplicating too many services.

Meyers stated that there will be approximately 13 million dollars that would be beneficial to the citizens of Greensboro including Bryan Park at Guilford County, Hagan-Stone Park, a downtown greenway loop, and skate park.

Maxson stated that, if approved, the skate park funds would be combined with existing funds that were approved in the 2006 bond referendum for a skate park.

Bruton stated that \$575,000 skate park funds were approved.

Bush stated that these types of joint projects are not a duplication of services. Access to more facilities is needed and this is one way to accomplish that on a broader basis.

Meyers stated that historically other bonds have failed but Parks and Recreation bonds seem to always pass.

Ponton stated that as a group we have always supported each other through the years. As county residents we have the same needs.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Marc Bush and seconded by Paul Brown to support the 20.2 million Guilford County Parks and Recreation bond proposal. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Meyers thanked the Commission for their time and support.

At this time Hoggard recognized the attendance of Councilperson, T. Dianne Bellamy-Small.

Invasive Plant Policy Proposal

Brooks Mullane, Program Support Supervisor, stated that Greensboro Parks and Recreation has the responsibility of managing over 3,500 programmed areas. There are thousands of more acres that are not programmed such as open space areas. There are a lot of areas in our parks, especially along streams, that have become invaded with unwanted plants. Work needs to be done on these areas that are becoming invaded with honey suckle, mimosa, privet, and multiflora rose. These plants are smothering native plant species and shading them not giving them a chance to grow. Guilford County shares our concerns.

Invasive plants are plants that are alien to our area that have been introduced by people and animals or through products coming in to our Country. They spread easily and can reproduce on disturbed land and on forest edges. Their seed dispersal is helped by birds, air and water. They compete with our native plants for water, nutrition and sunlight. They out compete our native plants easily because they tend to like poor soil conditions and grow quickly before our native plants can replenish the site. There are also safety concerns of limited visibility with an invasion of plants in natural areas. An intangible wall of honeysuckle or privet can cause site destructions within parks and a feeling of uneasiness as people walk down a greenway.

Mullane continued stating that Parks and Recreation has in the past worked successfully with Water Resources. For many years we worked on stream restoration projects and re-planting which improved the water quality, storm water run off trapping pollutants before they reach our streams and improving the quality and quantity of wildlife within

and around the streams. The streams a part of this project receive yearly contracted maintenance where once or twice a year invasive plants are removed. Water Resources funds \$52,000 every two years to pay for this contract. Unfortunately formal stream restoration is only in a few of our parks. We have many parks with small streams that do not fall under the storm water and stream restoration because they are too small, can not have a 50 foot buffer, and other reasons.

Mullane stated that as mentioned in the policy it is our intention to partner with outside agencies and volunteer groups in managing these invasive plant species. This will produce a cost savings for the City, but also educate and bring awareness of the problem to the public. This policy is being proposed in order to be proactive in keeping and protecting the integrity of our property and maintaining and improving the ecological diversity in esthetics. This policy is intended as an internal management tool.

Mullane made special mention of the following invasive plants: Autumn Olive, Callery Pear, Chinese Wisteria, Japanese Wisteria, English Ivy, Japanese Honeysuckle, Japanese Privet, Kudzu, Mimosa, Multiflora Rose, Oriental Bittersweet, Princesstree, Russian Olive, Tree of Heaven, and Stiltgrass.

Mullane informed the Commission that the department has already created partnerships with Ken Bridle, biologist and member of Piedmont Land Conservancy and Audubon Society, Karen Neill, Cooperative Extension Service Agent, Dennis Burnette, with the Piedmont Bird Society, Piedmont Land Conservancy, Carolina Butterfly Society and Audubon Society, David Phlegar from the Greensboro Storm Water Quality Division, Roger Bardsley and Alex Ashton with Guilford County Open Space/Planning Division, Steve Windham with New Garden Landscaping, Todd Lasseigne, Manager of the Paul J. Ceiner Botanical Garden, Mark Peters, Manager of Piedmont Nursery and Landscaping, and Darryl Holsey, Manager of Greensboro Botanical Gardens., Future partnerships will be various neighborhood associations, volunteer centers, and Cooperate groups for funding. Funding will be needed to plant native plants, chemicals, and manpower.

Acceptance of the invasive plant policy would allow the next step of requesting the endorsement of the Voluntary Codes of Conduct for Invasive Plant Control. The Voluntary Codes of Conduct, as stated by the Center for Plant Conservation, offer professional codes of conduct designed to curve the use and distribution of invasive plant species through self government and self regulation by the groups concerned.

Karen Neill, Cooperative Extension Services, stated that invasive plants are becoming a hot topic and Greensboro is most likely not the first city to discuss it. There are groups across the nation directing invasive plants that have gotten into botanical gardens or large areas of land they want to protect. Neill stated that what makes this unique is instead of a botanical garden it would be a city that actually adopts this. Citizens working with our nurserymen will be educated on what is currently in our parks and ways to help manage. They will then look at their own properties and make better purchasing decisions so that they are not buying invasive plants.

Alex Ashton, Guilford County, stated that this is an issue with the County as well. A partnership with the city is important because a lot of land throughout the county is jointly owned.

Beaman inquired if there is a list of plants that are considered invasive.

Mullane replied stating a list of invasive plants depends on the location and agency. The Southeast Pest Plant Council has a list of Guilford County invasive plants.

Neill stated that invasive plants can vary from county to county.

Chris Wilson stated that Mullane came to the Commission a few months ago with a vandal deterrent system presentation. She alluded to the flashcam system that is in progress and a future park watch program that helps deal with severe security issues. This presentation is also a part of that deterrent system in looking at some of the parks

and the way they are designed. Some of these invasive species provides a barrier that makes it difficult to monitor areas and give citizens a sense of comfort when they utilize parks. Ponton inquired as to how this would be funded.

Mullane stated that this would be funded through volunteers. Calls are received often from those in the community needing community service hours. Our first project area would be Price Park.

Neill stated that with the use of volunteers helping to manage it can actually minimize the amount of pesticides that would be used if treated. Volunteers would clip and only spot treat as opposed to broadcast treating using pesticides.

Action Taken

A motion was made by John Beaman, Jr. and seconded by Paul Brown to endorse the Invasive Plant Policy. A vote in favor was unanimous.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Councilperson T. Dianne Bellamy-Small stated that she is the District I City Council Representative and welcomed the Commission to the district. Bellamy-Small stated that she appreciated the fact that the Parks and Recreation Commission took the lead in bringing their meetings to the community as opposed to having them at City Hall. Bellamy-Small stated that in the news we hear that City Council doesn't think city employees are doing their job and wanted staff to know that she knows how hard Parks and Recreation staff works.. When she has had the need for tables, chairs, etc. staff has been gracious enough to accommodate and believes these type services get overlooked. People expect things to be done and are not cognizant that it takes manpower, resources, equipment, etc. Bellamy-Small praised staff for their quality of work and stated that there have been very little occasions where staff was not courteous.

Bellamy-Small continued stating she believes more can be done in our recreation centers to try to invite families to centers and is an area that needs work. The city or government in no way can solve all the ills of our community. They can help to be a resource place by having facilities. Bellamy-Small encouraged the Commission to see how to better use our recreation facilities and try to get kids involved at every level and to encourage college students to become volunteers to help with the kids.

Bellamy-Small stated that in regards to invasive plants, adopt-a-park is a good way to start encouraging the public and suggested the presentation be taken to the Neighborhood Congress as they can be a great resource as far as informing neighborhoods.

Bellamy-Small stated that City Council does need to hear from Commissioners as to those things they feel City Council needs to pay attention. Citizen concerns should be brought to the Commission prior to coming before City Council and then those concerns should be brought forth to City Council by the Commission. She then thanked the Commission for their efforts.

Lastly, she stated there is a need in District I for a pool and the residents do not want it located in the central part of Greensboro, they want a pool at Brown Recreation Center.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

The Commission decided that a Commission tour will be held on April 9, 2008 in place of the April Commission meeting.

Kuester thanked Councilperson T. Dianne Bellamy-Small for coming before the Commission. City Council members are impressed when attending a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting because all members attend and that is very appreciative. This Commission has a vacant seat and the Clerk's office is aware and is gearing up to make that appointment.

Kuester commended Alan Williams, Water Resources Director, for his efforts obtaining resources for water. Kuester expressed the importance of conserving water.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Rose Marie Ponton requested facility attendance figures, mainly from recreation centers, from this time last year.

Marc Bush stated that plans have been announced to build McPherson Stadium and improvements at Bryan Park once money is raised. Bush stated that he appreciated Council Person T. Dianne Bellamy-Small attending, her compliments to the staff, and her urging the Commission to be an advocate. Seeing the kids here at Simkins playing basketball is why the Commission meets at these facilities to actually see what is going on.

Bush stated that it was suggested that the Bicentennial Sports Heritage Exhibit use the Sportsplex and the Simkins Pavilion to show an event from 1808 verses now.

John Beaman, Jr. commended Chris Wilson and staff for their efforts with Tannenbaum Park making it visible. Beaman stated that in reference to the CIP list you must go before City Council or it will never get done. Beaman requested a priority list of the CIP projects.

Randy Scott stated that he supports the swimming facility venue.

David Hoggard stated that he takes to heart what Councilperson T. Dianne Bellamy-Small said and is willing to advocate on behalf of the Commission.

With no further business Hoggard adjourned the meeting at 5:51pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation